

Kuwait: Int'l Travel & Tourism Expo

Kuwait - Motaz Othman



For the journalist, in general, and the travel writer, in particular, the first encounter of a country is of extreme importance. Expectations may be somewhat preconceived due to information channeled by the mass media, or interaction with a country's nationals be they ordinary citizens or representative officials. Thus when an individual visits a foreign land all his faculties of awareness will be mobilized into receiving and adjusting his notion of that country, especially if his journey is of his own accord and not a formal trip.

My first visit to the State of Kuwait was with the intent of participating in the eleventh session of the Kuwaiti Int'l Travel & Tourism Expo, which was convened on 27th – 29th May 2003, in the International Exhibitions Grounds at Musharaf. My contribution was with the aim of introducing the Islamic Tourism Magazine to the Media and Tourism Sectors in Kuwait, as well as the country's citizens and visitors to the exhibition.

The airlines of any country are deemed to be its roving ambassador, and often form the first contact one may experience of the country of final destination. The outset of my trip to Kuwait was aboard flight No. 562 of Kuwait Airways, which departed on time heading towards Kuwait Airport. We were refreshed in our spacious and relaxing seats with a delicious lunch and selection of beverages. During the flight I had the chance to read the May – June,

issue of the 'Official Kuwait Airways Magazine'. My attention was caught by a letter written by the Chairman of the Board and Managing Director, Mr. Ahmed Faisal Al-Zabin, who was congratulating the country's neighbouring Iraqi people on their recent liberation from the former oppressive regime, and wishing them peace in their new found freedom. He proceeded to announce that Kuwaiti Airway flights to Baghdad would shortly ➤

Exhibition



be resumed, after a thirteen-year elapse.

This current trip of mine was not the first time I had flown aboard the Kuwaiti airlines, I have previously traveled with them in transit several times to the cities of the Arab Gulf and East Asia, observing each time the increased quality of service.

Upon my arrival at Kuwait Airport, which is well equipped providing the passing visitors with comfort and all necessary facilities, I proceeded to take a taxi and head towards my destination. The site my trip entailed reaching was the arena which was to host the 'Kuwait Tourism and International Travel Exhibition', organized by the Ministry of Information in collaboration with Kuwait Airways and the Hoteliers Union. Having arranged the stand aimed at promoting the 'Islamic Tourism' magazine, I wandered around the exhibition, which was attended by eighty-four exhibitors representing ministries, tourism corporations, travel and hotels companies and a number of Arab, European and Asian Airlines, which participated in order to familiarize Kuwaiti citizens with their countries. There were numerous distinguished displays, notably those representing the countries of Jordan, Egypt and that of the government of Dubai, in addition to the eye catching Turkish stand which was situated in the

middle of the Hall. Here chance offered me to meet anew, Mr. Hassan Zangour, the Information Officer at the Turkish Embassy in the state of Kuwait, who briefed me on the facilities offered by Turkey to the Arab visitors this year. I also met with my friend Dr. Al-Tayib Al-Khattab, the Director of the Regional National Moroccan Tourism Office and noticed how visitors paid particularly close attention to the Moroccan tourist attractions. Mrs. Layla Khattar, the Director of the Lebanese stand, who has persisted in participating in this exhibition since its inception, expressed her admiration for the Islamic Tourism Magazine and has promised to continue her co-operation therewith. Issues of 'Islamic Tourism' were distributed to participant hotels, after a visit to the stand allotted to the Hoteliers Union in Kuwait. Islamic Tourism was the only travel magazine in the exhibition. All participating hotels involved in the event expressed their admiration for the magazine and promised to forward a synopsis of the activities they offer in their hotels for publication in future editions of the magazine.

I paid further visits to numerous airline companies, tourism and travel offices and tour operators. Amongst the most unique

stalls I visited was that hosted by a team devoted to helping those suffering from acrophobia. It comprises of a group of pilots, aviation engineers and psychiatrists who came together in order to offer advice and guidance to those passengers who fear air travel. Advice can be obtained through their hotline, named 'Fear Not', telephone number: 009652629190, where one can talk to a team member about their fear of flying, and thus the reasons underlying such a complex could be discussed and hopefully dispelled.

More than two thousand specialists in the tourism sector as well as members from the general public visited the 'Islamic Tourism' stand. Issues of the magazine were distributed to those who showed a keen and particular interest and numerous subscription contracts were subsequently signed. Mr. Mazin Talhouni, Director of the Arab Region paid the stand a visit, as did Mr. Walid Mujahed, the Marketing Director of the Jordanian Tourism Promotion Authority and the Director of Finance of the Egyptian Tourism Promotion Authority.

The Jordanian Tourism Promotion Authority hosted a lunch party in the Kuwait Sheraton Hotel, which was attended by the Jordanian Ambassador Mr. Mohamed Al-Garan and a number of journalists, businessmen and tourism office directors. The party provided the invitees with the golden opportunity to form acquaintanceships and make connections. The exhibition administration also held a dinner party for the participants in the exhibition under the patronage of the Governor of the Hawalli Region; approximately 150 invitees attended this gathering.

Towards the end of such hospitalities there was a ceremony distributing awards and airline tickets to those who were fortunate enough to win a competition organized by the Exhibition - covering the phenomenon of travelers who fail to turn up for their bookings! The aim of the competition was to highlight this problem and urge people to contact operators and cancel their bookings if declining to travel so as to facilitate travel for other passengers.

Following the three-day exhibition, I was afforded the chance to visit some of the national Kuwaiti landmarks, which amalgamate the old and traditional with the new and contemporary. What also ►

Exhibition

The commercial zone at the city center of Kuwait, the capital, is home to the Liberation Tower, which was inaugurated about six years ago, and is the fourth tallest in the world. It is deemed to be one of the most modern civilizational landmarks in the country. Four-star hotel such as the Hilton, Marriott, Safir, Crown Plaza, Movenpick and others are all present and located in the city center.

distinguishes the state of Kuwait is the cleanliness of its streets, which all care to protect. The commercial zone at the city center of Kuwait, the capital, is home to the Liberation Tower, which was inaugurated about six years ago, and is the fourth tallest in the world. It is deemed to be one of the most modern civilizational landmarks in the country. Four-star hotel such as the Hilton, Marriott, Safir, Crown Plaza, Movenpick and others are all present and located in the city center. These hotels provide restaurants offering a variety of cuisine, including Lebanese, Italian and Chinese specialties amongst others. I also visited several new shopping complexes such as Al-Salhiya's, Al-Mahalab's and East's, but the most modern of all is the Arena Mall.

A visit to the state of Kuwait can only be consummated by visiting the Scientific Center, which takes upon itself the mission of bolstering natural sciences, the firm establishment of cultural heritage, dissemination of awareness and knowledge and the care and commitment by the members of society towards the preservation of wild and marine life and Eco-systems in the Arab Gulf region. The recently established scientific center contains the largest aquarium in the entire Middle East, one can view numerous species of marine life – sharks, exotic fish, sea snakes and octopuses – all can be witnessed at immense proximity but behind the security of a solid wall of glass. Wild animals such as foxes, bats amongst others can also be seen in other areas of the center. The center also boasts the unique 'IMAX' cinema with its gigantic three-dimensional screen. Following that you can then accompany your children to the Discovery Place, which is designed to evoke pleasure in the children's hearts. The Center throughout is a touristic highlight that will leave indelible imprints on the visitor's memory.

Finally Kuwait requires further time so as the visitor can frequent the country's historical landmarks as well as numerous museums such as the Kuwait National Museum, the Museum of National heritage, and the Peoples' Park, which time, this occasion unfortunately did not permit me to see. ■



The opening

افتتاح المعرض



Kuwait Airways

الخطوط الجوية الكويتية

Where is Kuwait's location on the map of tourism?

London – A. S. Shakiry

The human and material potential of Kuwait plays an important role in the renaissance of regional and Islamic tourism. There are many advantages in favour of Kuwait. We can list them as follows:

The Geographical location

The country is situated between a number of important Middle Eastern countries such as: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran as well as the other Gulf States. It is accessible by air (Kuwait Airline), sea and land. As far as the Kuwaiti Airline is concerned, it has made significant progress in competing with major airlines in providing a first-rate service for its passengers. However both the land and sea transportation services require further attention to enable the country to fulfil its role regionally and internationally.

Human resources and their role in activating tourism

It is not an exaggeration to claim that 95% of Kuwaitis have at some stage in their lives experienced and encountered some form of travel or touring. Kuwaitis thus possess an insightful and valuable expertise into all forms of tourism, particularly in regional and Islamic tourism, and are qualified to pass judgement regarding investment in the field of the tourism industry. Signs of major projects are evident throughout the region, such as the construction of the chain of Al-Safir Hotels amongst others.

Investment power of Kuwait

Kuwaiti merchants had, and still have, a major role in the import/export trade through out the world. This industry has diversified itself according to the national and international demands.

Kuwaiti investments have played a dominant part in the main stock markets of the world in the different fields of business, including the tourism industry.

Experience from the last fifty years in the realms of commerce and investment, combined with the knowledge acquired through travel, has culminated in the Kuwaiti people having the ability to place Kuwait in its rightful position within the world of tourism, especially of that in the Islamic world.